



*TRITON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT*

# *Middle School Task Force Report*

*Presented to the  
Triton Regional School Committee  
April 9, 2008*

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## Middle School Task Force

### **Background**

The Middle School Task Force convened on March 27, 2007, under the direction of Assistant Superintendent Kathleen Willis. The purpose of the task force was to make a recommendation to the superintendent regarding the grouping of students for instruction at the middle school level. The middle school's 2006 School Improvement Plan included a goal to shift grouping practices from homogeneous to heterogeneous grouping in the content areas. Heterogeneous grouping refers to grouping arrangements where whole classes of students of varying ability and achievement learn together in one classroom. Homogeneous grouping refers to grouping arrangements where students are grouped with others who have been judged to be at a similar ability or achievement level.

The goal that was included in the TRMS School Improvement Plan read as follows: "Provide equity and excellence for achievement by 'detracking' common curriculum classes." The superintendent requested further study of this goal prior to implementation.

### **Task Force Membership**

On February 27, 2007, the Superintendent's Bulletin included an announcement of the formation of a Middle School Task Force. Membership on the task force included parents (one from each elementary school and one from each grade in the middle school), three teachers representing grade seven, grade eight, and special education, and the middle school assistant principal. Twelve parents and three teachers responded to the announcement. When Middle School Principal Jared Fulgoni was hired, he also joined the task force and assumed the role of chairperson in October 2008. Members of the task force include:

<b>Middle School Task Force</b>	
<b>Member</b>	<b>Role</b>
Denise Mills	Parent-NES
Paul Lees	Parent-PGS
Nancy and Mike Reusch	Parent-SES
Karen Drahozal	Parent-MS
Patty Sommers	Parent-MS
Janet Tosi	Gr. 7 Teacher
Paige Ribaldo	Gr. 8 Teacher
Sandi Kearney	Special Education Teacher
Nancy Reed	Assistant Principal
Jared Fulgoni	Principal
Kathleen Willis	Assistant Superintendent

### **Meeting Schedule**

Middle School Task Force meetings took place from March 2007 to April 2008. Meetings were scheduled in the evening from 6:30-8:00 pm in the Triton Regional School District central office conference room. The schedule of meeting dates was as follows:

March 27, 2007

May 1, 2007

June 5, 2007

September 18, 2007

October 23, 2007

November 27, 2007

January 22, 2008

February 26, 2008 (cancelled-weather)

March 4, 2008

April 1, 2008

The Middle School Task Force established a timeline of one year to conduct activities that would lead up to making a recommendation to the superintendent prior to the April 9, 2008 Triton Regional School District School Committee meeting.

## The Process

### Guiding Questions

At the initial meeting members of the task force brainstormed a list of questions they felt required research to create a common understanding of the middle school model and best practices associated with that model that addressed homogeneous, heterogeneous, and flexible grouping practices.

### Readings

Task force members read several documents that provided a philosophical grounding of the middle school model as well as grouping practices. Readings included:

**Center for Collaborative Education (2001). *Turning Points: Transforming Middle Schools*. Boston, Massachusetts: Center for Collaborative Education.**

This document provides a broad overview of the principles that define middle school reform and describes the design of middle school practices based on recommendations identified in *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* funded by the Carnegie Corporation.

**National Association of Secondary School Principals (2006). *Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform*. Reston, VA: NASSP.**

This resource has been developed to assist school leaders with implementation of best practices at the middle school level. Published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 2006, this resource focuses on solid educational practices for young adolescents that lead to whole school improvement. Excerpts from Chapter 4: *Making Learning Personal* focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices that include the topic of grouping. There are 30 recommendations associated with *Breaking Ranks in the Middle*. Recommendation 20 states: “Each school will present alternatives to tracking and ability grouping,” and has been addressed in the final chapter from this resource.

**Education Week (2007). *Tracking*.**

This paper was produced by the research center within the Education Week organization. Education Week is a weekly education newspaper published by Editorial Project in Education Inc.

## **Position Statement of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform (January 2001).**

This statement about ability grouping has been endorsed by the National Middle School Association (NMSA) Board of Trustees.

The task force identified key points made within each of the readings and discussed those key points to develop a common understanding of research findings.

### **Triton Middle School School Council Presentation to the Task Force**

The task force requested a meeting with representation from the TMS School Council to discuss the research they conducted prior to the development of the 2006 School Improvement Plan goal to move toward heterogeneous grouping. Principal Peter Gadd and parent Gia Page attended the June 5, 2007 task force meeting and reviewed their PowerPoint presentation with the task force (Appendix A). Included in their presentation was the history of Triton Middle School's grouping practices, surrounding district's middle school grouping practices, a review of the current state of affairs and transition to heterogeneous grouping. They concluded with the statement that the consensus of the TMS School Council, after examining all of the evidence, was to move ahead with the stated goal in the 2006 School Improvement Plan for the 2007-2008 school year.

### **Analysis of High Performing Districts**

The examination of grouping practices is embedded within the broader context of providing effective learning opportunities for all students that lead to high student achievement. At this point, the task force decided to ground their research in practice by identifying a number of high performing middle schools and examining grouping practices used by these schools. The task force used the 2007 grade 8 MCAS results for English Language Arts and Mathematics as the measure for identifying high performing middle schools in Massachusetts. The task force decided to conduct a telephone survey to gather the answers to the following four questions:

1. Are your middle school core content areas grouped as heterogeneous or homogeneous classes?
2. If homogeneous, what criteria are used to group students?
3. How many years has the current practice been in place?
4. If the practice has been in place for less than five years, what changes are notable in students' behavior and attendance rate?

Twenty schools were identified and seventeen responded (Appendix B). In general, all content areas except for mathematics are heterogeneously grouped by the schools surveyed. Most middle schools surveyed maintain levels of instruction in mathematics, especially in grade eight where Algebra instruction takes place. In most cases, this practice has been in place five or more years. A variety of criteria are used to place students in leveled math classes including teacher recommendation, MCAS results, local assessments, and report card grades.

### **Site Visits**

Members of the task force identified schools as potential locations for site visits. The purpose of the site visits was to observe classrooms that were heterogeneously grouped and to speak with both teachers and administrators to gain a deeper understanding of the practice. The task force developed a series of questions that were used by each visiting team so that a level of consistency guided the process and information gathered could be compared. The list of questions included:

#### **Teacher Questions**

1. What is the average class size?
2. How do teachers meet the needs of your highest achievers?
3. How do teachers support low performing students in a heterogeneous classroom?
4. How do teachers differentiate assignments and assessments?
5. What staff development would you recommend for teachers transitioning to heterogeneous instruction?

#### **Administrator Questions**

1. What staff development do you provide for your faculty to support a heterogeneous classroom?
2. What have you seen as the biggest strength of heterogeneous grouping?
3. What are the weaknesses of heterogeneous grouping in your school?
4. How do you ensure that the needs of all students are being met?
5. Other

The site visit teams traveled to:

Doherty Middle School, Andover  
Dover-Sherborn Regional Middle School, Dover  
Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle School, Groton

Task force members shared the answers gathered for each question as well as any anecdotal information that contributed to the findings (Appendix C).

### **Recommendation to the Superintendent**

In our collective efforts to raise the achievement of students at the Triton Regional Middle School, the Middle School Task Force examined the school's current instructional grouping practices. Throughout this year long process members of the task force also examined the research on heterogeneous grouping (classes of students with varying abilities and achievement) and homogeneous grouping (classes of students judged to have similar abilities and achievement), surveyed high performing middle schools as measured by MCAS, and conducted site visits.

The task force concludes that:

- Due to a variety of flaws inherent in the current practice of grouping students, many of the middle school classes are already heterogeneously grouped.
- The highest performing middle schools in Massachusetts instruct their students in a heterogeneous model in all curricular areas except mathematics.
- The elimination of standard level classes reflects the beliefs associated with the TRSD core value of "Excellence for All."
- Substantive changes must take place in grouping, pedagogy, and programming to facilitate high levels of learning for all students at every achievement level.
- Many of the middle school teachers have been trained in and are implementing the practice of differentiating instruction. Ongoing professional development for teachers regarding differentiating instruction and collaboration are vital to the overall improvement of the school.
- Class size that conforms to district guidelines of not more than 25 students in a middle school classroom contributes to the success of heterogeneous grouping practices.
- Teacher feedback indicates that a change in grouping practice would be enthusiastically embraced by the majority of teachers in the middle school.

Therefore, the Middle School Task Force unanimously recommends that the Triton Regional Middle School move to the practice of heterogeneously grouping students in all content areas other than mathematics beginning in the 2008-2009 school year in order to advance the achievement of all students. Objective criteria for student placement in a mathematics level must be identified and stringently applied.

### **Next Steps**

Superintendent Sandra Halloran, High School Principal Kevin McLaughlin, and Middle School Principal Jared Fulgoni will meet with interested parents to discuss the proposed changes at the middle and high schools for the 2008-2009 school year. The meeting will take place on Monday, April 14, 2008, beginning at 7:00 pm in the Triton High School Library.

Principal Jared Fulgoni has scheduled his Middle School informational meetings for parents of sixth grade students as follows:

Newbury Elementary School	Wednesday, April 30, 2008
Pine Grove School	Thursday, May 1, 2008
Salisbury Elementary School	Tuesday, May 6, 2008

All meetings will begin at 7:00 pm and will be held in the elementary schools. A detailed memo will be sent home to parents announcing these meetings.

Principal Fulgoni will also work with his faculty to plan for continued professional development on the topic of differentiated instructional strategies. At a recent faculty meeting staff members were asked to identify a list of possible professional learning topics that would broaden their instructional skills to better meet the needs of all students (Appendix D). Middle School staff will prioritize these topics as the basis for professional learning during the 2008-2009 school year and beyond. Principal Fulgoni will work with the assistant superintendent and the New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) to create a quality professional development multi-year plan responsive to staff needs.

### **Conclusion**

The Middle School Task Force was charged with conducting further investigation into the merits of transitioning current grouping practices from homogeneous to heterogeneous in the core content areas recommended as a best practice within a middle school model. The task force members spent one year engaged in a variety of activities designed to deepen their understanding and inform their thinking around middle school best practices. The task force reached a unanimous decision to move a recommendation to the superintendent of schools. The Middle School Task Force successfully completed its mission in April 2008.

**2006-2007 Triton Middle School  
School Council  
PowerPoint Presentation Slides**

**Triton Regional  
Middle School**

*A Partnership With Students,  
Families, and Communities  
2006-2007*

**The Whole Child**

Characteristics of Young Adolescents:

**Social**

**Emotional**

**Physical**

**Intellectual**

***Turning Points: Preparing American  
Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

- Report of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development
- Examines:
  - the condition of America's young adolescents
  - how well middle grade schools serve them
- Makes recommendations for new structures for middle grade education

**Recommendations**

- Create small communities for learning
- Teach a core academic program
- Ensure success for all students through the elimination of tracking
- Improve academic performance through fostering health and fitness

- Empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students
- Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents
- Reengage families in the education of young adolescents
- Connect schools with communities

### Area Middle Schools

- Rupert A. Nock Middle School, Newburyport (5-8)
- Amesbury Middle School (5-8)
- Ipswich Middle School (6-8)
- Georgetown Middle School (6-8)
- Hamilton-Wenham Regional Middle School (6-8)
- Masconomet Regional Middle School (7-8)
- Pentucket Regional Middle School, West Newbury (7-8)

### Triton Regional Middle School 1971-2006

- 1971-1999 Triton Regional Junior/Senior High School (7-12)
- 1997 Middle Grades Study Group
- 1999 Triton Regional Middle School (7-8)  
Construction Project
- 1999-2001 NELMS Consortium
- 2001-2006 TRMS Growth and Development

### TRMS Today

- Common Core Academic Program aligned with MA Frameworks and Standards
- Exploratory courses to engage active learners
- Student Support Services for the "whole" child
- Developmental Guidance "Team" communities for learning
- Dedicated and skilled staff of middle level specialists
- Shared team-based leadership
- Student Teacher Ratio: 26:1 (Gr. 7) 25:1 (Gr. 8)
- Class Size Range: 18-30
- Leveled Classes:  
67% (A), 33% (S) Grade 8  
65% (A), 35% (S) Grade 7  
82% (A), 18% (S) Math 8  
58% (A), 42% (S) Math 7



# TRITON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Middle School Survey of High Performing Schools as Measured by 2007 MCAS Results in ELA and Math Grouping Practices

<p><b>Middle Schools</b></p>	<p><b>Core Content Grouping Practices</b></p> <p><i>Are the middle school core content areas grouped as heterogeneous or homogeneous classes? (ELA, math, science, social studies) write in</i></p>	<p><i>Criteria Used to Group</i></p> <p><i>If homogeneous, what criteria are used to group students?</i></p>	<p><b># Years Grouping Practice in Place</b></p> <p><i>How many years has the current practice been in place?</i></p>	<p><b>Notable Changes</b></p> <p><i>If Less Than 5 Years, What Changes are Notable in Behavior and Attendance Rate?</i></p>
<p><b>Andover West Middle School, Andover, MA</b>  <b>Steve Murray, Principal</b>            978-623-8700  <a href="mailto:dholmes@aps1.net">dholmes@aps1.net</a></p>	<p><u>Heterogeneous</u>: All classes are heterogeneously grouped.</p>	<p>Did not answer</p>	<p>We are beginning our 5<sup>th</sup> year of heterogeneous grouping in math. Other subjects have been unlevleled for considerably longer. We also currently have no “small group special ed” classes. This phase-out has occurred in more recent years, and may return if we begin a low cognitive program in our school next year.</p>	<p>Student behavior is generally unchanged. Attendance rate has not been affected. The change in math has been controversial for some parents and challenging for some teachers.</p>
<p><b>Raymond J. Grey Regional Jr. High</b>  <b>Acton-Boxborough, MA</b></p>				
<p><b>Lawrence Middle School</b>  <b>Brookline, MA</b></p>				

Middle Schools	Core Content Grouping Practices	Criteria Used to Group	# Years Grouping Practice in Place	Notable Changes
<p><b>Concord Middle School</b> Concord, MA</p>				
<p><b>Dover-Sherborn Regional Middle School</b> Dover, MA</p>	<p><u>Heterogeneous</u>: 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> except for math, but it has some overflow in certain classes like Spanish and Latin.</p>	<p>Teacher recommendation, MCAS, grade 6 test and mid-year assessment that permits 7<sup>th</sup> grade homogeneous math designation</p>	<p>At least 5 years</p>	<p>Principal Randall noted nothing significant. His concern with heterogeneous grouping is that he thinks the teachers need aids or other strong classroom support in order to do it all. He feels the way Dover-Sherborn does it is more titled leveling and tracking since kids can test in and out of different subject areas.</p>
<p><b>Hopkinton Middle School</b> Hopkinton, MA</p>	<p><u>Heterogeneous</u>: 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> except for advanced math and 8<sup>th</sup> except for two levels of algebra.</p>	<p>MCAS scores, 2 achievement tests, teacher recommendation, and “As” in core subjects</p>	<p>Two years ago the math program was changed</p>	
<p><b>John Glenn Middle School, Bedford, MA</b> Phyllis Jayne Viladenis, Principal 781-275-3201 <a href="mailto:jayne_rotsko@bedford.k12.ma.us">jayne_rotsko@bedford.k12.ma.us</a></p>	<p><u>Heterogeneous</u>: Social Studies and Science</p> <p><u>Homogeneous</u>: Math, English (grades 7 and 8 only)</p>	<p>Based on grade in previous course; MCAS “advanced” in subject on previous year’s test; (Math) score on grade level computation exam; (English) placement essay</p>	<p>Six years.</p> <p>We are in the process of revising our criteria to provide for objectivity without too much reliance on MCAS scores</p>	<p>Did not answer</p>
<p><b>Bromfield Public School, Harvard, MA</b> James O’Shea, Principal 978-456-4152 <a href="mailto:joshea@psharvard.org">joshea@psharvard.org</a></p>	<p><u>Heterogeneous</u>: All grouped heterogeneously</p>	<p>Did not answer</p>	<p>Did not answer</p>	<p>Did not answer</p>

Middle Schools	Grouping Practices	Criteria	Years	Notable Changes
<p><b>Nauset Regional Middle School</b>  <b>Orleans, MA</b>  <b>Gregory Baecker, Principal</b>  <b>508-255-0016</b>  <a href="mailto:baeckerg@nausetschools.org">baeckerg@nausetschools.org</a></p>	<p><u>Heterogeneous</u>: All other  <u>Homogeneous</u>: (Advanced)            Grade 6 Math, ELA and Social Studies            Grade 7 Pre Algebra            Grade 8 Algebra</p>	<p>MCAS results that range between 266-270 for all advanced classes.            Otherwise based on first marking period with a recommendation from teacher.</p>	<p>Approx four years for some content areas. First year for grade 8 science.</p>	<p>No notable changes—kids are highly motivated.</p>
<p><b>Masconomet Regional Middle School</b>  <b>Topsfield, MA</b></p>	<p><u>Heterogeneous</u>: 7<sup>th</sup> except for math (Pre-A or Accelerated Algebra) 8<sup>th</sup> grade except math (algebra or algebra honors) and English/English Honors</p>	<p>7<sup>th</sup> grade students take a test            8<sup>th</sup> grade students take test, teacher recommendation and must have an “A” throughout 7<sup>th</sup> grade</p>	<p>At least 10 years</p>	
<p><b>William Diamond Middle School</b>  <b>Lexington, MA</b></p>	<p>Teams are formed to represent different learning styles. Students are placed on teams according to their needs.  <u>Heterogeneous</u>: all classes except math.</p>	<p>Surveys            Principals            Interview all            Parents face-to-face</p>	<p>Have done it this way for 20 years.</p>	
<p><b>Thomas Blake Middle School</b>  <b>Medfield, MA</b></p>	<p><u>Heterogeneous</u>: Core classes except for math            7<sup>th</sup> grade math take pre-algebra or 25% take an accelerated math            8<sup>th</sup> grade – 3 levels of Algebra</p>	<p>Teacher recommendation and MCAS</p>	<p>Have done this way for over 10 years</p>	
<p><b>Pollard Middle School</b>  <b>Needham, MA</b></p>	<p><u>Heterogeneous</u>: All classes except math. All 7<sup>th</sup> graders take Pre-Algebra I or 2. All 8<sup>th</sup> graders take Algebra I or II</p>	<p>Teacher recommendations and MCAS</p>	<p>At least 3 years</p>	

Middle Schools	Grouping Practices	Criteria	Years	Notable Changes
<b>Ephraim Curtis Middle School</b> <b>Sudbury, MA</b>	<u>Heterogeneous</u> : All except math—3 levels	Give students MCAS test from previous year. Continental Math League Test Teacher recommendations	At least 10 years	
<b>Wayland Middle School</b> <b>Wayland, MA</b>	<u>Heterogeneous</u> : All except math—2 levels	Teacher recommendations and MCAS	Always	
<b>Wellesley Middle School</b> <b>Wellesley, MA</b>	<u>Heterogeneous</u> : 7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> Except for 4 levels of math	Teacher recommendations		
<b>Sarah W. Gibbons Middle School</b> <b>Westborough, MA</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> Math – 2 levels 8 <sup>th</sup> Math – 3 levels	Teacher recommendation	At least 7 years	
<b>Blanchard Middle School</b> <b>Westford, MA</b>	<u>Heterogeneous</u> : All except math—2 levels	Rubric made up of MCAS Common Benchmark Assessment Test Teacher recommendation	Forever	

Middle Schools	Grouping Practices	Criteria	Years	Notable Changes
<p><b>Arthur W. Coolidge Middle School, Reading, MA</b>  <b>Craig Martin, Principal</b>  <b>781-942-9158</b>  <a href="mailto:cmartin@reading.k12.ma.us">cmartin@reading.k12.ma.us</a></p>	<p><u>Heterogeneous</u>: All except grades 7 and 8 math.</p> <p><u>Homogeneous</u>: Grades 7 and 8 math.</p>	<p>The grade 7 math placement is based on assessments and teacher recommendations at the end of grade 6.</p>	<p>More than 5 years</p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>Boston Latin, Boston, MA</b>  <b>Lynne Mooney Teta, Head Master</b>  <b>617-635-8895</b>  <a href="mailto:latin@boston.k12.us">latin@boston.k12.us</a></p>	<p>Have received your survey regarding middle school grouping practices. It must be noted that Boston Latin School is an exam entrance public school. Therefore, all of our students are invited to attend based on ISEE exam performance and 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade academic achievement in English and mathematics.</p> <p>That being said, we have three clusters at the grade 7 level, and they are randomly assigned. All sections within the cluster are also randomly assigned (with an eye toward racial and gender balance), with some constraints due to the music program individual students participate in.</p> <p>At the grade 8 level, students can opt to continue with the cluster model (approx. 50% choose this option.) The other half are assigned to classes on a high school model. We invite two sections of students to participate in grade 8 math honors, based upon their mathematics performance in grade 7.</p>			



## MIDDLE SCHOOL TASK FORCE

### *Site Visitation Information*

**School:** Dover/Sherborn **Date:** January 16, 2008

**Visiting Task Force Members:** Paul Lees and Patty Sommers

**1. What is the average class size?** 12 in Math, Overall 17 per class

**2. How do you (teacher) meet the needs (challenges) of your highest achievers?**

*Teach at the highest level at all times. In some math classes, offer “Gold,” “Silver,” and “Bronze” tests to challenge top students.*

**3. How do you support your low performing students in a heterogeneous model?**

*Offer “small group” classes for lower achievers to catch up.*

**4. How do you differentiate your assignments and assessments?**

*Usually don’t need to— keep expectations high and grades will differentiate and show amount of effort / ability put into assignment.*

**5. What staff development would you recommend for teachers transitioning to a heterogeneous model?**

*DI—(Differentiated Instruction) training.*

**Questions for the Administration:**

**6. What staff development do you provide for your faculty to support a heterogeneous model?**

*Some individuals take seminars/workshops, mentoring program with staff, DI instruction two to three years ago.*

**7. What have you seen as the biggest strength of heterogeneous grouping?**

*Haven't really experienced homogeneous to know the difference.*

**8. What are the obstacles (if any) of a heterogeneous grouping model at your school?**

*If a class is very diverse, might need multiple tests, assignment, etc.*

**9. How do you ensure that the needs of all students are being met (SPED, low performers, high achievers)?**

*Small group for low performers; individualized extra help class two or three times a week in English and or Math where needed.*

**10. Other:**

*General culture of learning/excellence observed. Students expected to perform—assignments as expected. When they did not, disappointment was shown and each student was individually counseled to discuss lack of performance.*



## MIDDLE SCHOOL TASK FORCE

### *Site Visitation Information*

**School:** Doherty Middle School, Andover, MA **Date:** January 18, 2008

**Visiting Task Force Members:** Jared Fulgoni and Sandi Kearney

**1. What is the average class size?** 24-25

**2. How do you (teacher) meet the needs (challenges) of your highest achievers?**

*Differentiated instruction is the key. Core concepts that all students should know are identified. The curriculum is expanded for high achievers. ACC Math Extensions is used for higher and enrichment (computerized program).*

**3. How do you support your low performing students in a heterogeneous model?**

*There are two adults in all classes: one regular education teacher and one special education teacher. Core concepts are taught, sometimes in small groups within the class. Pre-teaching and re-teaching are done during ITT (Integrated Team Time).*

**4. How do you differentiate your assignments and assessments?**

*Identify learning objectives for all students—modify and enrich to accommodate individual learning abilities.*

**5. What staff development would you recommend for teachers transitioning to a heterogeneous model?**

*It depends on the backgrounds of the staff. How much differentiating is happening?*

**Questions for the Administration:**

**6. What staff development do you provide for your faculty to support a heterogeneous model?**

*All staff trained in differentiation. Continue to train.*

**7. What have you seen as the biggest strength of heterogeneous grouping?**

*Improvement in achievement. Improvement in instruction in classes.*

**8. What are the obstacles (if any) of a heterogeneous grouping model at your school?**

*Some scheduling difficulties for students involved in band, G&T, and electives*

**9. How do you ensure that the needs of all students are being met (SPED, low performers, high achievers)?**

*Co-teach. Learning style specialist work with teams. Pull out to support.*

**10. Other:**

*Use Connected Math Program for math instruction. Political pressure in middle and high school.*



MIDDLE SCHOOL TASK FORCE

Site Visitation Information

School: Groton Dunstable Middle School Date: February 15, 2008

Visiting Task Force Members: Jared Fulgoni, Mike and Nancy Reusch

1. What is the average class size? 25-29

2. How do you (teacher) meet the needs (challenges) of your highest achievers?

- *Through differentiated instruction within the classroom.*
- *Renzuli: Model (student strengths, interests, giftedness).*
- *Choices for students—self selected challenge.*

3. How do you support your low performing students in a heterogeneous model?

- *Co-teaching model.*
- *Challenging all students to highest levels.*
- *High expectations for all students.*
- *Differentiated instruction.*

4. How do you differentiate your assignments and assessments?

- *Lots of assessments (must know kids).*
- *Common “core” novels—various writing prompts.*
- *Challenge questions.*
- *Student choice—rubrics.*

5. What staff development would you recommend for teachers transitioning to a heterogeneous model?

- *Differentiated instruction.*
- *Understanding by design (backwards design)*
- *Co-teaching for teams (sped and regular)*

**Questions for the Administration:**

**6. What staff development do you provide for your faculty to support a heterogeneous model?**

**7. What have you seen as the biggest strength of heterogeneous grouping?**

- *Academic performance of all students increases.*

**8. What are the obstacles (if any) of a heterogeneous grouping model at your school?**

- *Scheduling: grouping some causes scheduling nightmare.*

**9. How do you ensure that the needs of all students are being met (SPED, low performers, high achievers)?**

**10. Other:**

- *Open invitation for teacher to visit classrooms, etc.*
- *All high performing schools are doing business this way—that must be saying something.*



## PROFFESIONAL LEARNING TOPICS

*What resources/professional learning opportunities are needed to teach all learners in a heterogeneous classroom?*

### **Differentiated Instruction Training**

- We are special education teachers who do differentiated instruction each day. Need time to share strategies.
- Staffing to support diverse learners
- Social Studies: New textbooks that are designed for differentiated instruction
- Need time to develop more differentiated instruction. Attending workshops always gives me new ideas for differentiated instruction.
- Differentiation
- Strategies for differentiated instruction

### **Multiple Intelligences/Learning Styles Training**

- Field trips
- Multiple Intelligence Training. Education about the learning styles and how to differentiate instruction to meet all needs
- Learning style assessments (2)—multiple intelligences
- Hands-on activities
- Movement-based learning

### **Instructional Technology Training**

- Computers in classroom
- Technology training (2)
- Technology and resources for instruction
- Computers! Cart of Laptops for class
- Technology training with sites useful for students: games, web-quests, exemplars, manipulatives, etc.

### **Professional Sharing/Learning**

- Share ideas with colleagues
- Bring your favorite activity for sharing; make a catalog.
- Get together as group to discuss our 'best' activities—put together a manual.
- Professional development days where presenter models rather than just 'tells' us about useful techniques.
- Resources and current options
- Build professional library of resources.
- We need to have more time to share ideas. We all have something to help others. Suggested ways to do this: professional development days, team time increased (to use only for sharing).
- Participate in seminars re: middle school student (current behaviors and trends)

### **Other**

- An aide
- Visitations at model schools/classrooms
- Brain Gym (refocusing techniques)